

She has tales to tell

December 22, 2006 DUXBURY REPORTER

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On a brown piece of paper is a hand written letter by Mary Cushing, the daughter of Benjamin and Mary Cushing, capturing the history of the Cushing property where once Indians and settlers shared the land.

Netti Edwards explains that after her mother passed away she and her sister debated disposing of the old letters and pictures, but something made her keep them. Tucked away in blue folder kept up in the attic, Netti retrieved various letters, documents, and photos, tangible products of history, that tell the story of the Cushing family from the 1800's to the present day. The 94-year-old descendant of the both the Cushings and the Aldens has a rich history of Duxbury stowed away in her mind and in her home. She is a fourth-generation Cushing. Her mother Ida Crocker Holman is daughter to Betsy Cushing Crocker, making her great-grandmother and great-grandfather Mary and Benjamin Cushing.

In the letter, Mary Cushing explains, based on what was told to her by her parents, that the Indians once inhabited the land bought by the Cushings on Island Creek Pond. It states that the Indians used the land surrounding the pond as "happy hunting land." The settlers and the Indians had an understanding that on certain days the settlers could use the land to wash the sheep in the ponds when the Indians were not going to be there. After washing the sheep they could then use the land to shear the sheep. The letter was a record proving the



PHOTO COURTESY NETTI EDWARDS

Netti Edwards sits on her mother Mary Cushing's lap, second from left, in 1912.

Across from the dining room table is one of the three original fireplaces used for cooking. Black soot-stained bricks line the fireplace and the beehive oven attached. Netti explains the largest of the black iron pots was used by her mother to fry doughnuts they ate for breakfast.

co-existence of the different inhabitants, with the clear understanding that only one was to occupy the land at any given time. Although Benjamin

Cushing owned the land, he shared the land with the Indians.

This letter and many other various documents recording events and deeds

taking place over a hundred years ago fill the elderly woman's home. Surrounded by a past that is no different to her than of Christmas tales from our childhood Netti thinks of her memories and stories as just that stories. She is careful with detail, because as she says she doesn't want to tell a story she cannot back up with the proof.

"These letters and pictures are my proof, so if someone says it isn't so, I can prove to them that it is," she said.

This past Tuesday, Netti recalled the history of the Cushing family. Flipping through old papers declaring the first

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clambake of the season to a picture of her at six months old surrounded by family and neighbors, a photograph of the original Cushing house in Tinker Town, and many other records she has kept she tells stories her ancestors, and childhood.

Netti grew up in Tinkertown in Duxbury. Since the age of nine she has lived in the same house she lives in today, on Main Street in Kingston. She spent her childhood among aunts, great aunts, cousins and grandparents in Tinkertown. The documents she preserved echoes the house, built in 1828 that still stands almost in its original form. Netti and her

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family moved into the house in 1921, and her father purchased it from the original builders family in 1941, when the inheritor of the property did not want it and sold to him. Eighty-five years later, Netti still lives there with only a heating system added and a conversion from the original two-family home to a single-family dwelling.

Across from the dining room table is

one of the three original fireplaces used for cooking. Black soot-stained bricks line the fireplace and the beehive oven attached. Netti explains the largest of the black iron pots was used by her mother to fry doughnuts they ate for breakfast. The only new bricks that lay within the fireplace cover the ground where the dry box once was. The opening that leads from the dinning area into the current kitchen was

opened during eth heating renovation as well. She said that the open space that acts a hallway now was once the large dry box used for storage of hams, bacons and other dry goods to keep them from spoiling or molding. At the top of the wall the wood from the dry box still remains intact.

Wednesday Dec. 13, Netti turned 94, making her the oldest living woman on her side of the family. Her stories date back to before she was born. Letters, pictures and a vast memory keep the lineage of her family alive and well today. As long as Netti has a story to tell, a story will be told.